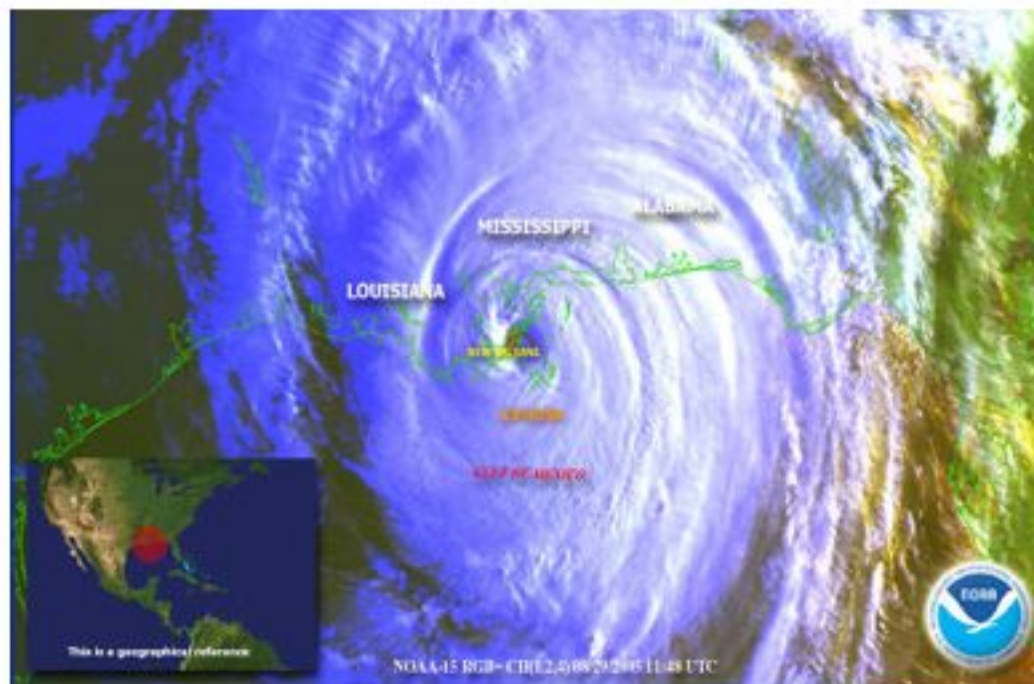




Observations on the Impact of Hurricane Katrina - *and NARA's* *Role in Recovery*

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NARA-SW
(RACO-WEST 2006)**

Katrina Hit The Coast - August 29th 2005



New Orleans Under Water

- 2ND Largest Hurricane Ever Recorded
- Sustained winds of 150 mph and gusts to 184 mph
- 1,000+ people died (Louisiana and Mississippi)
- Costliest Natural Disaster Ever (\$ Billions+)
- 80% of New Orleans flooded once the levees were breeched.

- New Orleans Lost half of It's Population



Mississippi Coast Was Crushed



Pass Christian, Mississippi...



....and Along the Gulf Coast

Photos - FEMA

What Did Agencies Do?

- Most Federal agencies were okay – evoked COOP Plans (Electronic information helped agencies stay in business instead of depending on just paper records).
- Local Government and State Agencies Hit Hard (Parishes) – Such as Orleans, St. Bernard, as well as the Notarial Archives
- FBI – Sent in a “Records” SWAT Team to capture their most important records – took them back to Virginia
- VA – Sent many of their records to Oklahoma and Missouri

What Did Other Agencies Do?

- Social Security – 3,400 cf of temporary records destroyed (delegated authority)
- National Finance Center – 4,000+ cf of records got wet (and moldy)
- Courts (Federal) – okay (however we were not able to access their non-current records stored in Fort Worth)
- US Coast Guard – Took care of their own records
- Numerous other agencies – slight damage or requests for assistance (still getting some calls for help in 2006 – maybe one or two a week)

What Did NARA Do?

- Selected employees got the necessary shots – & got ready to go in when the situation stabilized
- Gathered intelligence (agency headquarters in Washington DC, GSA, DHS, State Archives, Internet, and Disaster Recovery Companies – *BMS CAT* and *Belfor* - Texas based)
- Tracked Status of Federal Agencies - Created Spreadsheet - 23 pages of Federal, State, Local and Cultural Institutions
- *(Note: NARA-SE in Atlanta tracked agencies in Mississippi and NARA-SW in Fort Worth monitored Louisiana and Texas)*

What Did NARA Do?

- Participated in Numerous Telecons – sometimes several a day (DHS/FEMA, GSA, OPM, White House, NARA, FEB's etc.)
- Networked – With State Archives, Historical Societies, Professional Organizations (SAA), etc. Many archivists and records managers (not just from NARA) went to the region to help.
- Listserves proved to be helpful in getting information.
- Provided emergency grants from NHPRC to the state archives in effected region.
- Provided expedited access to copies of service records to veterans and civil servants so that they could re-establish their personal information / obtain benefits.
- Agency Websites proved very useful in providing contact information and status of their operations.

What Did NARA Do?

- NARA Agreed to Help Orleans Parish at Their Request - (Coroner's Office, DA, and Clerk of the Criminal Court)
- NARA Managed a FEMA Mission Assignment that Permitted Us to Assist With the Pack-out of 5 Truck Loads of Wet / Moldy Records. Also included computer hard drives.
- Also Began to Work with FEMA's JFO (Joint Field Operation) in Baton Rouge – Providing Records Consultation (Ongoing)

What Did NARA Do?

- Provided Advice to FEMA (JFO) on:
 - E-Mail Retention
 - Interpretation of White House Memo (to keep all records related to Katrina)
 - Records Management Best Practices



Michael Baimbridge, NARA-SW in New Orleans.
Michael is assisting the FEMA JFO in Baton Rouge.

"Yes, that is a NARA Seal tattoo"

What Did NARA Do?

- Allen Weinstein, Archivist of the US Toured the Damaged Region (Mississippi and Louisiana) with
 - Doris Hamburg (NARA – Preservation)
 - Karl Niederer, New Jersey State Archivist and
 - Preston Huff (NARA-SW Region
- and the Archivist Toured the Mississippi Coast – with members of the Mississippi State Archives (conducted press conferences in a couple of towns)

What Did NARA Do?

- In Baton Rouge – we met with the Louisiana State Archives staff – and then met with the Lt. Governor and the Secretary of State.
- In Baton Rouge – also met with members of the LSU History faculty – including the Dean
- In New Orleans – we toured:
 - US Customs House (built in the 1850's – heavily damaged by the storm)
 - Notarial Archives – at their Convention Center temporary site (Ann Wakefield and her staff)

What Did NARA Do?

- Finally we toured the Orleans Parish site – where NARA staff were overseeing the pack-out of the wet / moldy records. CNN filmed effort.
- NARA committed some 18 staff days for the four main staff that were on the ground in New Orleans:
 - Hilary Kaplan and Kathy Ludwig – Preservation (College Park, Maryland)
 - John Smith (Records Mgmt) and Barbara Rust (Archives) – NARA-SW – Fort Worth, Texas

Orleans Parish Courthouse



Pack-out begins as records are pulled from the Courthouse, Coroner's Office, District Attorney's Office and the Clerks of the Criminal Court's Office



Wet, moldy records on the floor. Paths had to be cleared to start work.



Still wet records on the floor. Note
computer and photocopier to the right.



Contractor pulls records from Courthouse for triage.



Records are pulled from cabinets and boxed.



Damp records had to be coaxed out of the drawers and were then placed into boxes and labeled.



...some records suffered
some damage (left)

...and some records suffered
little damage (right)





Card-size records expanded when wet – then they became moldy.



Because records swell when wet many cabinets were cut open.



Bar Codes are crucial in keeping track of recovered records.



John and Carrie (NARA) help load scrap cabinets



Countless truckloads of scrap cabinets were removed



Below – indicates that contents were below water level



Organization is key to finding records later





Books also received bar codes to assist in tracking



Computer records were also salvaged in this project



Barbara Rust Removes Hard Drives (above)





Hilary Kaplan (NARA Preservation) and John Smith (NARA Records Management) – model the necessary protective clothing.



Archivist of the US, Allen Weinstein talking to NARA staff before touring the inside of the Orleans Parish Courthouse.



Archivist Weinstein prepares to tour the Orleans Parish Courthouse (above).
Kimberly Butler, Clerk of the Criminal Court talks to the Archivist (right)



Lessons Learned

- Our Website (<http://www.archives.gov>) worked well. Lots of information relating to disaster related services, such as
 - Disaster Recovery Company Information
 - Preservation Tips (dealing with wet /moldy records)
 - Local and National NARA Contact Information (lots of phone calls)
 - Delegated Authority (destroying damaged records)
- Advice and assistance on issues concerning classified national security information
- Links to other NARA programs / Information – i.e., Federal Records Centers, Records Scheduling, etc.

Lessons Learned

- We now know a lot more about our agencies in the area, i.e., where they are, what they have, key contact information, etc.
- Working closer with FEMA and GSA now.
- Will probably be a first responder in conjunction with GSA (NARA staff can go with GSA staff to check on record-keeping situation in a given building).
- National Awareness of records issues increased
- More knowledgeable of Disaster Recovery Company's capabilities (paper and computer)
- We have begun to be more Proactive – i.e., Hurricane Rita – we began to call agencies in the region to offer advice, assistance, etc, BEFORE the Hurricane struck.

Need To Improve

- Agency contact information – including addresses, telephone numbers, and e-mail addresses. (Regional Database)
- Educating Federal agencies about preventive measures and to inform them of NARA services.
- Advertising NARA services in the effected Region – via press releases and working with Federal Executive Boards.

Reminder

- Hurricane Season Starts June 1st – and the National Weather Service predicts more than the usual number of major storms.
- Main thing to remember: <http://www.archives.gov>